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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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EXDIS

THE GVN PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FOR "MARCHING NORTH" (REPORTED EMBTEL 201) MAY TAKE SEVERAL COURSES. IN THE FACE OF US COOLNESS AND ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE OF REAL GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT OUTSIDE CERTAIN MILITARY QUARTERS, IT MAY DIE DOWN FOR A WHILE ALTHOUGH IT IS HARDLY LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PROPONENTS OF A "QUICK SOLUTION" MAY BE ABLE TO KEEP IT ALIVE INDEFINITELY AS AN ACTIVE ISSUE, IN WHICH CASE IT IS LIKELY TO FOMENT AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE U.S. (ASSUMING THAT WE CONTINUE TO GIVE IT NO SUPPORT) TO THE SERIOUS DETRIMENT OF OUR WORKING RELATION WITH THE GVN AND HENCE OF THE ULTIMATE CHANCES OF SUCCESS OF THE IN-COUNTRY PACIFICATION PROGRAM. IN SUCH A CASE, VIETNAMESE LEADERS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, UNABLE TO FIND A VENT TO THEIR FRUSTRATION IN "MARCHING NORTH" MAY SEEK OTHER PANACEAS IN VARIOUS FORMS OF NEGOTIATION FORMULAS. GENERAL KHANH MAY FIND IN THE SITUATION AN EXCUSE OR A REQUIREMENT OT RESIGN.

FINALLY, THIS "MARCH NORTH" FEVER CAN GET OUT OF HAND IN AN ACT OF RASHNESS -- ONE MAVERICK PILOT TAKING OFF FOR HANOI WITH A LOAD OF BOMBS -- WHICH COULD TOUCH OFF AN EXTENSION OF HOSTILITIES AT A TIME AND IN A FORM MOST DISADVANTAGEOUS TO U.S. INTERESTS.

FACED WITH THESE UNATTRACTIVE POSSIBILITIES, WE PROPOSE A COURSE OF ACTION DESIGNED TO DO SEVERAL THINGS.

WE WOULD TRY TO AVOID HEAD-ON COLLISION WITH THE GVN WHICH UNQUALIFIED U.S. OPPOSITION TO THE "MARCH NORTH" CAMPAIGN

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WOULD ENTAIL. WE WOULD DO THIS BY EXPRESSING A WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN JOINT CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR VARIOUS FORMS OF EXTENDED ACTION AGAINST DRV. SUCH PLANNING WOULD NOT ONLY PROVIDE AN OUTLET FOR THE MARTIAL HEAD OF STEAM NOW DANGEROUSLY COMPRESSED BUT WOULD FORCE THE GENERALS TO LOOK AT THE HARD FACTS OF LIFE WHICH LIE BEHIND THE NEON LIGHTS OF THE "MARCH NORTH" SLOGANS. THIS EVENING WOULD ALSO GAIN TIME BADLY NEEDED TO STABILIZE THIS GOVERNMENT AND COULD PROVIDE A USEFUL BASIS FOR MILITARY ACTION IF ADJUDGED IN OUR INTEREST AT SOME FUTURE TIME. FINALLY, IT WOULD ALSO AFFORD US AN OPPORTUNITY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO HAVE A FRANK DISCUSSION WITH GVN LEADERS CONCERNING THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES WHICH THEY WOULD ENVISAGE AS THE PURPOSES INHERENT IN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE DRV. WE DO NOT REALLY KNOW WHETHER THEY FEEL THAT VIET-NAM CAN INDEED BE UNIFIED BY MILITARY ACTION, OR WHETHER SUCH ACTION IS INTENDED ONLY TO INTRODUCE A PRESSURE WHICH WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO VIET CONG TERROR IN ORDER TO INDUCE DRV TO DESIST FOR AIDING VC AND TO IMPROVE BARGAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR A POLITICAL NEGOTIATION WITH HANOI.

IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IN INITIATING SUCH A LINE OF ACTION THAT WE MAKE A CLEAR RECORD THAT WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT ASSUMING ANY COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENT SUCH PLANS. THEREFORE, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT I BE AUTHORIZED TO GIVE GENERAL KHANH THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN STATEMENT:

"THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS NOTED RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY VARIOUS LEADERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM PROPOSING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE SOURCES OF AGGRESSION IN NORTH VIET-NAM. THE REASONS WHICH HAVE PROMPTED THESE STATEMENTS ARE CLEAR AND THE IMPATIENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM IN THE FACE OF CONTINUING SUBVERSIVE WARFARE FROM THE NORTH IS UNDERSTANDABLE.

"IN CONSIDERING WAYS AND MEANS TO BRING THE VIET CONG INSURGENCY UNDER CONTROL, AUTHORITIES IN WASHINGTON HAVE GIVEN SERIOUS STUDY OVER A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD TO THE QUESTION OB BRINGING MILITARY PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE LEADERS OF NORTH VIET-NAM. IT HAS BEEN THEIR CONCLUSION THAT THIS IS A COMPLEX PROBLEM INVOLVING JUDGEMENTS AND DECISIONS IN BOTH THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY FIELDS WHICH NEITHER THE UNITED STATES NOR VIET-NAM COULD TAKE INDEPENDENTLY. THE CURRENT ACTIVITY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CONSISTS IN THE PROVISION OF MASSIVE ASSISTANCE TO YOUR GOVERNMENT IN THE EXTENSION OF ITS ICRC NTPI*APPROVED PACIFICATION PROGRAMS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. THE QUESTION OF EXTENDING THIS ASSISTANCE BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO A PROGRAM OF ACTION OUTSIDE

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THE TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF SOUTH VIET-NAM HAS NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY DISCUSSED UP TO NOW, BUT IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR GIVING THE MATTER A THOROUGH ANALYSIS.

"IN THE VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THE BEST METHOD OF PRODUCING SUCH AN ANALYSIS WOULD BE IN THE FORM OF A JOINT CONTINGENCY PLANNING STUDY, UNDERTAKEN BY APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIVES OF OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS, WITHOUT ADVANCE COMMITMENTS BY EITHER SIDE AS TO SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS. IF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM AGREES, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS AUTHORIZED ME TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET, UNDER CONDITIONS OF MAXIMUM DISCRETION AND SECURITY, WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM TO UNDERTAKE SUCH DISCUSSIONS."

IT IS MY OPINION THAT SUCH DISCUSSIONS, IF INITIATED WITH RESPONSIBLE VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS, WOULD NOT ONLY DEVELOP SOME OF THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL THINKING WHICH IS CURRENTLY MOTIVATING THE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP, BUT WOULD ALSO REVEAL THE NEED FOR THE COMPLETION OF A NUMBER OF PRELIMINARY ACTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION CAN BE GIVEN TO EXPANDING THE WAR. SUCH ACTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE THE ABSORPTION OF THE NEW A1H AIRCRAFT BY NOVEMBER 1, THE FILLING OF THE RANKS OF UNDERSTRENGTH ARVN UNITS, AIR DEFENSE MEASURES FOR URBAN CENTERS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GREATER DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THE VC THAN NOW EXISTS IN ORDER TO SECURE THE REAR AND FLANKS OF FIGHTING FORCES.

IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF APPROVAL FOR THE ABOVE STATEMENT CAN BE RECIEVED TO PERMIT ITS USE AT MY NEXT MEETING WITH KHANH SCHEDULED FOR 1600, 27 JULY (SAIGON TIME).

GP-1.

TAYLOR

CFN 96 GVN 201 1, _____

NOTE: ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O AT 7:55 AM, JULY 25.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE AT 8 AM, JULY 25.

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would entail. We would do this by expressing a willingness to engage in joint contingency planning for various forms of extended action against NVN. Such planning would not only provide an outlet for the martial head of steam now dangerously compressed but would force the generals to look at the hard facts of life which lie behind the neon lights of the "March North" slogans. This planning would also gain time badly needed to stabilize this government and could provide a useful basis for military action if adjudged in our interest at some future time. Finally, it would also afford us an opportunity, for the first time, to have a frank discussion with GVN leaders concerning the political objectives which they would envisage as the purposes inherent in military action against the DRV. We do not really know whether they feel that Viet-Nam can indeed be unified by military action, or whether such action is intended only to introduce a pressure which would be equivalent to Viet Cong terror in order to induce DRV to desist for aiding VC and to improve bargaining opportunities for a political negotiation with Hanoi.